

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 998. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

"A LEAL LASS."

By RICHARD ASHE KING.

CHAPTER II. A DECLARATION.

FOUR or five years after Hugh's departure, May's governess married, and was succeeded by a young lady of her mother's choosing. Miss Pim's chief recommendation in the eyes of Mrs. Beresford was her coming direct from a baronet's family. For the rest, Miss Pim was the merest portress at the Gate of Knowledge, who never entered herself the door she opened for others. She could translate coherently French and German words into English words, but they passed through her brain without leaving a trace of the ideas they expressed behind them. She was, in fact, an even exceptionally mechanical specimen of the host of teachers of both sexes, who resemble nothing so much as the money-changer at Charing Cross, who spends the day exchanging foreign money into English and English into foreign, accurately and honestly, without purchasing anything with the coin which passes and repasses through his hands continually. It must be said, however, in Miss Pim's defence, that she regarded governessing as a mere "point d'appui" for matrimony. She sat very lightly and loosely to her work in her assurance of speedy promotion; and she had all the airy serenity and security of the bird in Victor Hugo's exquisite image:

*Soyons comme l'oiseau posé pour un instant
Sur des rameaux trop frères;
Qui sent trembler la branche, mais qui chant pour-
tant,
Sachant qu'il a des ailes.*

Her head was as full of day-dreams, novels, and romantic matches, as that of

any other prude—for prude she was, of course. Having as a governess to be decorous, she overdid so unnatural a part, and would fain have brought up May in the straitest sect of social binding. But here the good Vicar, who, if he did not see through Miss Pim herself, saw at least through her system, counteracted her daily and wholesomely.

Con O'Neil, the old Irish gardener, on the other hand, saw through Miss Pim herself with a clearness probably due to that young lady's persistent efforts to convert him to Protestantism. As the current Curate happened to be Evangelical, Miss Pim became zealously anti-Catholic, and Con got the benefit of her zeal. Mr. Winslow, the Curate of that day, had communicated to her the shock he had himself received from the discovery that the Vicar of the parish had a Roman Catholic in his service; and Miss Pim had begged from the Curate tracts, to be administered to Con for his conversion. It was about as hopeful a task as to endeavour to convert a sheep into a goat by feeding it on ivy.

"I hear you're a Roman Catholic, O'Neil?" she began, in the manner of a magistrate administering a caution to a criminal not to criminate himself.

"Me, miss! I'm a gardener, miss; that's what I am," Con replied dourly, to suggest that this was the sole relation in which he stood to Miss Pim, or with which she had anything whatever to do. In extenuation of the temper Con displayed in the interview we are recording, two things should be remembered. In the first place, all attempts at proselytism were associated in his mind with what is known in Ireland as "souperism"—that is a base and abominable system of making "conversion" a condition of relief in cases of desperate destitution.

And, in the next place, Con resented Miss Pim's persistent attempts to prevent May's usual daily chat with him. Ever since she could talk and toddle, May had bullied Con abjectly, in the loving way in which we bully a pet dog; and indeed Con had all a dog's devotion to her. The chief pleasure of his day was a talk with the child, and this Miss Pim was bent on preventing, as nothing was more vulgarising than talking with servants or low people. How amazed Miss Pim would have been to hear that she was herself an incomparably more vulgar-minded person than Con!

As Miss Pim was not the sort of person to take the hint that Con to her was "a gardener" and nothing more, she explained condescendingly, "I meant about your religion, O'Neil."

"And what about it, miss?" Con asked, striking his spade into the ground with the defiance of a challenge and looking up at her doggedly with his hands on the handle and his chin on his hands.

"I was asking you only what it was," Miss Pim replied indignantly.

"Heaven knows what it is," answered Con equivocally, leaving her to infer, either that it was a matter of small account, or that it was a matter of account only to Heaven.

"But you are a Roman Catholic?" reiterated Miss Pim with wooden persistence.

"I'm what my father afore me was, and what my childre will be after me, like yourself, miss—barrin' the childre." Con thus corrected himself with an emphasis that left in no doubt his assurance that Miss Pim would die an old maid.

This hint Miss Pim ignored, and replied only to his suggestion that one's religion was a mere matter of the accident of one's birth. "We should think for ourselves."

"It's little harrum that'll do ye, miss."

"But it's not thinking for yourself to take your religion from—from others," cried Miss Pim, fearing to say "from your priest."

"I'd not be for takin' it from thim that hasn't much of it to spare, anyway," retorted Con, adding, as though it were an after-thought, "an' more betoken, it's thim that's always for thrustin' it on ye."

"If you mean me —"

"Ah, thin, miss, how could it be you I wor manin', whin divil a wan o' me knows what religion ye're of at all, at all. I hadn't the bad manners to ax ye?"

Miss Pim had so little idea of this being a rebuke that she took it for an apology.

"I belong to the Church of England, and, of course, as a Roman Catholic, you'll think me a heretic."

"I beg your pardin', miss, but who told ye I wor a Catholic?"

"But you are, aren't you?" cried she in amazement.

"Ax the master, miss, an' I'll go bail he'll tell ye what I tould ye meself—that I am a gardener," Con replied doggedly; and then he proceeded to do his work as though Miss Pim were non-existent.

At last it dawned on her that Con hereby intimated the impertinence of her catechism. If the Vicar considered Con's religion no concern of his, how much more should she refrain from any interference therewith? To the Vicar he was a gardener only, and he might well, therefore, be a gardener only to her. It took her some little time to understand this, yet even then she returned with the doggedness of dulness to the charge.

"But you have time when your work is done, O'Neil, to think of more important things than gardening?"

"But it's gardenin' I've got to do now, miss," replied Con, too vehemently busy to look up even.

"Of course; but when you've done, I mean, you might, perhaps, read some of these tracts at home," she said nervously, producing a batch of tracts on the Romish controversy from her reticule.

Con, thinking her incorrigible, worked on furiously in silence.

Taking his silence for assent, however sullen, she added, "I shall leave them here on your coat, O'Neil, so that you mayn't forget them." Then, having sown this handful of the good seed on the hopeful soil of Con's coat, which lay on a seat near him, she tripped triumphantly away.

Con straightened himself, took his handkerchief from his hat to mop his forehead, looking after her the while and muttering "tracks" over and over in a tone of withering scorn. Then, throwing his handkerchief violently into his caubeen, and clapping that upon his head impatiently, he took out his pipe from his waistcoat pocket in order to solace with a smoke his outraged feelings. Having chopped a bit off his Limerick twist, minced it, rubbed it well between his hands and filled therewith his pipe, he lit it, flung away the match, and said between the first violent sucks and puffs necessary to get it going:

"Begorra—she'd—'ould—a match—to

show—the sun—his coorse—she would—so!"

Upon this idea of the arrogance of the proselytising Protestant, as represented by Miss Pim, he mused whilst he smoked, with the result that, when his pipe was done, he took "the thracks," tore them to thread-papers and used them, tied to string, for frightening away the birds from some seed he had sown.

While he was in complacent contemplation of this good work, and muttering to himself with a grin—"I've converted him, anyway"—May joined him. The child spent much of her pocket money, when her brother Fred was not at home to absorb it all, in buying Con, of all things, Limerick twist!

Now ordinary tobacco is to this fearful drug "as moonlight is to sunlight, and as water is to wine," and May had all a smuggler's anxiety to undergo in buying this contraband article from the amazed village shopkeeper and in conveying it as swiftly as possible—that her hand or frock might not be drenched with the stench thereof—to her beneficiary, Con. Con had had to give up long ago all attempts to dissuade her from making him so contraband and compromising a present, since May had discovered that a pipe of Limerick twist was the greatest pleasure of his life. He took it now always with much demonstration of delight, and repaid her indirectly, not only by working overtime in her special garden, but by stocking it with the choicest of her favourite flowers, which, he assured her, were given him by a friend in Leeds, though, as often as not, he had to buy them.

"Top of the mornin' to you, Miss May."

"I've brought you some tobacco, Con. Do have a smoke."

"Heaven bless ye, miss. It's just the wan thing I was sick for this moment; think of that now!" cried the rascal, taking out the pipe still hot from his last smoke. "Thank ye kindly, Miss May," he said as he took from her hand the tobacco.

He chopped a bit off, and minced it fine very deliberately, and took an unusual time to fill and light his pipe; for he was revolving in his mind some effective way of preventing the child from making him any more such presents, not only because he had much rather she spent her little allowance on herself, but also because he foresaw Miss Pim's inevitable dis-

covery, some time or other, of May's contraband trade, and the inevitable prohibition thereafter of all intercourse between him and the child.

When he had at last got the pipe to draw, he puffed out a vast volume of smoke, heaved a heavy sigh, and said as he scratched his head:

"Ah, begor! That's the lasht bit o' baccy you'll smoke, Con, for long enough—long enough."

"Why, Con?"

"It's the hearrt, Miss May," he replied, placing his hand where he supposed that organ to be: a little above his left hip. "You s ee, miss, the smoke sets the hearrt flutherin' like a burrd in a cherry net; an' the docther, he says to me—Docther Doyle they call him—'O'Neil,' he says, 'it's smotherin' yere hearrt wid smoke, ye are,' he says; 'that's what's the matter wid you,' he says."

"But I didn't know you were ill, Con," May cried in deep concern.

"Ah, it isn't what ye'd call ill, Miss May; only the hearrt gets drownded in smoke, an' wallops about a bit thryin' to breathe; that's how it is, miss."

This did not sound reassuring.

"Oh, Con," she cried, in keen distress, "do give it up; do."

"Deed thin, Miss May, I must; but I can't shtand the sight of it, miss; an' I says to the docther, I says, 'there's Miss May, God bless her! will be bringin' me a bit, docther, an' I must smoke it, if I dhropped; I must so,' I says. 'To be sure,' he says, 'you can't refuse the likes of her,' he says; 'but sorra another ounce she'd bring you, if she knew it was gallopin' yere hearrt to death; an' that's just what it's doin', O'Neil; an' I'm not goin' behind yere back to say it,' he says." This fine imaginative dialogue had an effect on May that Con had little reckoned on; for the child realised so vividly the danger he had lightly suggested that she burst into tears.

"Oh, Con!" she sobbed, "I'm so sorry. Throw it away, oh, do throw it away." And before he could answer she had taken the tobacco from him and flung it over the wall.

He was so much shocked and touched by her tears that he at once pitched the pipe after it.

"Yerra, Miss May asthore, whisht wid ye! Sure, nobody minds what Docther Doyle says—not wan. It's always whistlin' for death, he is, if ye'd a pain in yere finger."

This picture of the doctor with death, like a dog, at his call, was hardly comforting to May.

"You don't feel like that now, Con, do you?" she asked with a wistful anxiety which was really as touching as it seemed to Con to be.

"I, miss? Not I, miss; I niver felt bether in my life. Sure I'm as strong as a horse, Miss May; and the docther, he says, 'O'Neil,' he says, 'if you give up smokin',' he says, 'your heart'll go shteady as a clock,' he says, 'for fifty year an' better.'"

"Do give it up, Con."

"I will, miss; I will."

"And you oughtn't to work till you get well, Con. I'll ask papa to let you stay at home till you're better."

"Sure, that 'ud be the death of me intirely, Miss May," Con hastened to say in some trepidation. "It's work that keeps the blood goin', and the blood keeps the heart goin', like a wather mill, miss."

Con's versatile physiology completely imposed upon May, who was of an age and of a character to accept implicitly everything a friend told her. Con's great strength and weakness was the amazing imaginative power and readiness of his invention of reasons for all he did and excuses for all he left undone, which usually were so plausible and ingenious as to impose even on the Vicar for the moment. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that Con's pleasure in invention was so keen, and his ethical estimate of truth so light, that he would prefer a false, but ingenious, reason or excuse to an equally adequate one which was true, but common-place. Candidly, Con was an incomparable and incorrigible liar, without being in the least degree mean, tricky, or cowardly. That a man should be a liar without these usual characteristics of a liar would, perhaps, be impossible in the case of a matter-of-fact Saxon; but in the case of an imaginative Celt, it is possible enough, and even common enough.

However, May's trust in Con was absolute, for it takes some time and many impositions to sap a child's trustfulness, and May was an unusually trustful child.

"Where is she, Miss May?" asked Con, to turn the conversation.

"Who, Con? Miss Pim? She's gone to visit her district," May answered, as she dried her eyes.

"I wish you'd ax the master, Miss May, to let her lave me out of her dishtiric'.

She's been thryin' to make a souper of me all the mornin'!"

"A what, Con?"

"Wan of thim, miss, that sells their sowls for a sup o' soup—an' it's a small sowl ye'll buy for that, I'm thinkin'!"

As May's only idea of such a transaction was derived from "The Bottle Imp," a gruesome German story that made her flesh creep, she could merely look her amazement.

"She's been givin' me thracks, miss, to convert me," Con added in explanation.

"Oh!"

"You're a Catholic, O'Neil?" says she. "I am, thank God," says I. "It's little you've got to be thankful for," says she. "There's thim that has less," says I. "Manin' me?" says she. "You, miss!" says I. "Sure it's the other way wid you," says I. "How's that, O'Neil?" says she. "You've so much religion that ye're givin' it away, miss," says I, pintin' wid the rake to the thracks. "They're for you," says she. "I wouldn't rob ye, miss," says I. "Oh, they cost nothing," says she. "They're worth it," says I. "They'll do you no harm anyway," says she. "I'll be bound they won't," says I. "Thin you'll read 'em?" says she, haudin' thim to me. "Thank ye kindly, miss," says I, "I'll make good use of 'em," says I. "And so I did, Miss May, for there they are!" pointing with a grin to the fluttering fragments of the tracts strung on string.

May having digested this voracious version of Con's interview with Miss Pim, naturally took a schoolroom view of it.

"Oh, but, Con, she'll question you on them!"

"Ah, thin, Miss May, 'tisn't my govern-ess she is?" This being just the sort of idea that would strike a child as irresistibly droll, May laughed delightedly. "Faix it's canin' me she'll be nexst," added Con lugubriously, to keep the joke up, for nothing pleased him more than to make May laugh.

"No; she'll put you in the corner, Con—in the water-barrel," she added in high delight, after looking round the garden for the corner best adapted for a penitentiary.

Into this childish fooling Con entered with the keenest zest, capping each suggestion of May's with something still more grotesque, till the thin jest was threshed threadbare.

"But really, Con, you mustn't mind about the tracts; for, now that she's got

a district, she'll be always out in the afternoon, and I can walk with papa, and talk to you, and climb the pear-tree, and everything."

"She'll not hould an, Miss May," Con prophesied dismally, with a shake of the head; "she isn't that sort."

"Oh, but she will; I'm sure she will. She promised Mr. Winslow she would take it for a year."

"Oh!" cried Con in a tone which expressed that light had broken in upon him, and then he muttered to himself compassionately, "Ah, thin, Heaven help the poor young man that daren't say 'No' to her!" thereby, with one blow, striking at Miss Pim's frowardness and Mr. Winslow's sheepishness, which must result in his being led by her, eventually and inevitably, to the altar.

"Con!"

"Yes, Miss May."

"You mustn't mind if I don't come to see you every day."

"Of coorse not, miss; there's your lessons to larn."

"It isn't that, Con; but guess who's coming."

"Master Fred?"

"Hugh, Con! Mr. Grey!"

"Misther Hugh! More power to him! Ah thin, Miss May, didn't I tell you he'd come back to you, like a swallow to the summer? I did so."

"He's coming to stay a week, Con."

"He'll shtop more nor a week, miss, I'll be bound."

"But he has only a month to stay in England, altogether."

"Arrah, Miss May, what in the worruld brings him to Amerikey, wid land of his own at home!" asked Con, taking a thoroughly Irish view of emigration, as only the desperate resort of the evicted victims of landlordism.

"He goes to seek adventures, Con," May replied in a superior and almost reproving tone; for she delighted in and devoured stories of adventure, and retailed them sometimes to Con.

"Adventures is right enough in a shtory, but, bedad, there's sould comfort in 'em in arnest. I like lishtenin' to a shtorm in bed, miss; but I'd be long sorry to go to say to hear it; I would so."

"Mr. Hugh is different," May replied superbly.

"Different from the likes of me, miss! Sure there isn't the like of Mr. Hugh in the country!"

"Oh Con! I'm so glad he's coming! Do you think he'll remember me?"

"Remember ye, miss! 'Con,' says he to me the day before he wint away, 'Con,' says he, 'you'll look atther Miss May's rabbits an' guinea-pigs,' says he, 'an' give 'em green shtuff, an' keep 'em clean an' tidy,' says he. 'Yerra, Misther Hugh,' says I, 'sorra a bit of heartt she'll have for 'em when you're gone.' 'Ah Con!' he says wid a sigh, he says, 'childhres' heartts is like them slips,' he says, 'asy transplanted; they've no roots like ould folks,' he says, as if he was as ould as an oak. 'It isn't so ould ye are yourself, Misther Hugh,' says I, laughin' at him, for many's the rise he tuk out of me; but there washn't a wink of a laugh in him whin he answered, 'I'm ould enough to know my own mind an' heartt, Con,' he says, 'an' 'tis rooted she is in 'em,' he says; 'an' the deeper she'll grow in 'em every year,' he says."

Certainly no one, from internal evidence, would have considered this highly figurative and effusive speech to be Hugh's; but, probably, Con, like Thucydides, considered that an historian had the picturesque right to clothe his hero's known sentiments in dramatic and rhetorical speeches. Anyway, Con's rhetoric was effective, for of course May believed in the literal accuracy of the conversation thus reported.

"How could he think that I should forget him?" she cried, with flushed face and the tears in her eyes; "I could never forget him, not if I lived till I was ever, ever so old."

"Misther Hugh, do you mane, miss?" asked Con with such seeming stupidity that May looked at him in surprise.

"Yes."

"Bedad, miss, I thought you'd forgotten him by this."

May stared up at him in perplexity, for Hugh was an ever-recurring subject of conversation between them.

"I mane, miss, that you didn't think as much of him as you used to do—"

"I think more of him," she answered with almost indignant earnestness, and then added, with all the impressiveness of retrospective old age: "I was only a child then, and never thought how kind, and good, and generous — there never was anyone so good. Oh, Con! I wonder will he be like that still?"

"Deed then, miss, you must ax himself," answered Con, grinning up at someone behind her.

May turned round to find herself face to face with Hugh—big, brown-bearded, but Hugh still, in right of his large, soft brown eyes—brighter through the sudden moisture that had sprung to them—and his frank smile.

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried as he took her up in his arms and kissed her.

"I have been wondering the same thing about you for a month or more, 'Will she be like that still?' And you are, and you aren't," he said, holding her from him, to take a critical survey of her happy face.

Con, seeing him at the corner of the small conservatory, had made signs of silence to him, over May's unconscious head, so that Hugh had heard her whole declaration from "I could never forget him."

THE OUTCASTS' HAVENS.

ALL waifs and strays from the streets, picked up here and there and brought in—now by a policeman; now by some stray Samaritan; or perhaps by pitying householder, whose door-step has served as a couch for the poor little wanderer; but here they are in harbour anyhow: boys on one side, girls on the other; each with a great bowl of hot tea to the front, flanked with an equally satisfactory trencher of bread and butter. Yes, it is tea-time at the Outcasts' Haven; the great bell has rung, and the clatter of hundreds of hob-nailed boots on the wooden stairs has resounded through the lofty building, and here is the ship's company all present, a poor, shipwrecked crew indeed, and only just saved from the cruel raging sea.

From all parts of the country come the waifs and strays. They have drifted up to London by various ways and from many quarters, to cluster around the stony-hearted stepmother; but the greater part are no doubt London-born. Some have never had a home, however wretched. Brought into the world in a workhouse, or perhaps a common lodging-house, and knowing no other shelter during their short lives, with the street as nursery and school. Others again have been carefully reared for a time, have had careful, industrious mothers, and honest, hard-working fathers. But mother died, and father took to drink. All was lost for the little family; turned into the streets, they drifted hither and thither; but one saved out of the number and brought to the Haven at last.

The Havens for Outcasts are at Limehouse, not far from the Docks, and are surrounded by a poor and struggling population; but they are not designed especially for the benefit of Limehouse, but for all London round, wherever its lights may twinkle, and wherever boys and girls may be cast away upon its streets. It has happened that the trade of Limehouse has declined of late years, and here was a roomy warehouse to let, which was secured by the head of the London Cottage Mission and skilfully adapted to its present purpose: as a home for the homeless, that is, and a refuge for poor children neglected by all the rest of the world.

An outside view shows a square substantial building, standing cornerwise between Doa Street and the Burdett Road—that long, level Burdett Road, which, passing by wharves, canals, warehouses, and slums, unites the river-side districts with the more inland regions of Mile End and Bow. Being at the Limehouse end of the Burdett Road, there is a breezy kind of feeling in the air, and the gusts of wind and rain fall upon us as if fresh from the tarry collapse of ships and barges.

The doors of the Haven stand wide open for all homeless little ones, but in a metaphorical and not a literal sense. Actually, the entrance is through a well-secured door, which, with its little wicket for scrutinising visitors, reminds one somewhat of a convent door. But there is not conventual stillness within. Indeed, there is something of an uproar: shrill, childish voices, and yet not quite childlike voices; shriller laughter and cries of glee, which still are not altogether mirthful. It is the children's play-hour, and the little girls in their play-room are jumping and romping about—not without need of being helped and encouraged a little; for, sooth to say, the notion of play seems altogether strange to many of these little creatures, and there is a sudden galvanic movement about them, as if the springs of joy and laughter in their frames had grown rusty and out of use.

But we must begin at the beginning. How is the little waif, cold, wet, and hungry, with only the hard stones for a bed, to gain admission? Well, here is the first rule of admission—tidings of joy, surely to all who have hearts to feel for the little ones:

"Any outcast boy or girl, up to the age of sixteen, without parents, guardians, or friends, and who has no home or bed but

the streets, will be admitted at once, at any hour of the day or night free, and be provided with a bath, warm clothes, food, and a bed."

And to aid in the work of rescue, cards are distributed among the police containing the address of the Outcasts' Havens, and the necessary blanks for particulars of the case; that is, name, age, and where found. But, indeed, anyone finding a child in this sad condition, may bring or send it to the Haven, the address of which should thus be carefully noted, as 1A, Dod Street, and 311 and 313, Purdett Road, Limehouse, London, E. The place is well known now among the force, and the policeman on his beat who finds some poor outcast shrinking from the flash of his lantern, is no longer compelled to hopelessly bid it move on, but knows exactly where to send it for warmth, shelter, and kindly care.

Here then a light is always burning, a beacon light in the wilderness of misery and despair; here a door is always ready to be opened; at the cry of real distress all is prepared for the reception of the unknown guests. Tanks of hot water heat the building and afford a warm bath at any moment. The outcast child is washed and purified, its rags are taken away to be disinfected and desiccated; it is clothed, fed, and put to bed, apart from the rest, till the doctor's fiat pronounces it free from infectious disorders, and permits it to share in the daily life of the Havens.

And so the basement of this great pile of buildings is devoted to the general machinery of warming, cooking, cleaning; to baths and washhouses; to lockers, where the scanty belongings of the inmates, a few shapeless rags for the most part, are numbered and put away. Then there are store-rooms full of clothing. Each girl has, in addition to all necessary underclothing, a new warm frock of blue serge, a warm ulster for out of doors, a waterproof hat. The boys, too, wear a neat uniform of blue serge, and some of them assume quite a smart and military bearing.

Then there are three floors above, containing spacious and airy rooms—play-room, dining hall, dormitories, one over the other; the girls' part being, of course, quite distinct from the boys', although they assemble in the same room for meals and prayers. The daily life is varied and active enough. All of the proper age are sent to the neighbouring Board Schools; there are workshops close by where shoemaking and tailoring are done; with wood-

chopping and other light labours. Some of the boys have been placed in offices and warehouses as office boys and messengers, coming back to the Haven every night.

All kinds of strange little beings are brought to light in the draught of this great net. Sometimes it is a runaway who has really a home if he chose to go to it, and he is quickly packed off to his anxious relatives; but a large proportion of the little waifs have absolutely nobody belonging to them, and in this refuge have, for the first time, learnt that the words father and mother had any significance, as implying fatherly care or motherly love.

Here is one little fellow, brown and dark-eyed, who cannot speak a word of English—he is a Breton boy, and has, perhaps, some sorrowful story concealed in his impassive bearing. Many of the children were found in Trafalgar Square, and were rescued by Mr. Austin from the terrible scenes of want and misery which were witnessed on the bleak wet nights, when hundreds of the destitute were lying crouched on the cold wet stones. Some of the children had enjoyed no other home for weeks and months. There stands a child whose mother was found sitting upon the stones exposed to all the rain and wind with only one ragged skirt for clothing, beneath which clustered her half-naked babes seeking such warmth as her poor chilled frame could give. Even now, all comfortably clothed and sheltered, the little outcasts bear upon their pallid faces the traces of those long nights of misery and privation. These Trafalgar Square boys and girls, however, seem to feel a kind of pride of origin, and, indeed, the circumstances of their rescue have a flavour of adventure about them. It was Mr. Austin who drove up among the outcasts with a waggonette loaded with bread for their relief, and who then filled the vehicle with the children who came within his scope.

The story of many of the lads is simple enough: mother died, and father went away. Sometimes there is actual desertion by the parents, and, in other cases, early orphanage. The last resource of the boys is selling matches; they earn threepence or fourpence a day perhaps, enough for food but not for lodgings, and thus the street is the nightly refuge. A casual job brings in sometimes sixpence or even eightpence, and then the lad enjoys the luxuries of the fourpenny kip, or lodging-house for the night, to turn out on the streets again

next day. Other boys come from the country. Here is one, a nice bright-looking lad, smart enough in his blue uniform, who shall tell his own tale.

"I'm fro' Mansfield in Yorkshire. Oh, yes, I had a comfortable home, only father and mother died, and we went to live with granny. Oh, she wasn't that bad off." A pardonable gleam of family pride lights up the boy's face. "She'd a gaarden and two pigs; she's got my little brother now; but, says I, I'll shift for mysen. And I went off and sold things about the country, Lincoln, Nottingham, and most everywhere. Then I comes to London, thinking I should do fine, and then I lost my trading money and got into trouble. First of all it was two 'tators. Me and another boy, we cut a hole in a sack and took two 'tators: and that was seven days. And then I came out barefooted and I took a pair o' boots. That was three months; and then I got a fortnight for begging. And arter that I went in the Square—Trafalgar Square, and then you fetched me away, Mr. Austin, you know."

A likely boy is this, with all his wits about him and with plenty of good in him, in spite of his troubles. He is in an office now, and his master knows all about the boots, and has no misgivings as to the safety of his own. And yet, but for the helping hand at the right moment, this boy would have probably gone to swell the criminal population; and, from the lowest point of view, would probably have cost the country a heavy score in the future.

But if the condition of the lost, homeless boy is lamentable enough, what must be said for the girls—exposed to every kind of contamination, and yet retaining the capacity of suffering, and a painful consciousness of degradation? And the stories belonging to the girls, of which many cannot be fully told, are enough to wring the heart, and bring tears to the eyes of those most unaccustomed to the melting mood. Here is a girl with a soft delicate face, which might, under other circumstances, have been full of refinement and charm, a girl of fourteen years or so, who was found hiding herself from the light of day in some half-ruined outhouse. Clothing had she none, except an old newspaper wrapped about her loins. Want and privation had reduced the girl almost to a skeleton; and for many days she could only partake of nourishment in small and repeated doses. Questioned about those former evil days, she can only reply in sentences interrupted

by choking sobs. It is as if she had fled from some inexpressible cruelty and degradation, which it breaks her heart to recall. But she is safe now and in good hands, and the oil of loving-kindness is poured upon her wounds.

Here is a more cheerful witness. A nice bright-eyed Irish lassie this—Irish in blood that is, for she has not had a chance of picking up the brogue. "Please, sir—Father was a soldier once, in the Third Buffs, and got his discharge; and then he was a postman in the County of Kent. But he got paralysed, did father, and could not work, and mother started to go back to Ireland, and we walked and walked, and came to London, and here mother left me." The remembrance of it brings a burst of irrepressible tears. Here the matron corroborates the story; she remembers the poor mother and the little tribe of children with bare and bleeding feet, and how tearfully thankful she was to leave this one little maid in safe hands. "And mother had written—oh, yes, she had written from the workhouse in Liverpool—in the workhouse after walking two hundred miles"—and here the child could not help crying again, for the soldier's little daughter had her feelings, mark you!—and somehow it seemed hard.

And this little story reminds us of another excellent feature of the Havens, as to which we may quote the public notices that are posted all about. "Any parents with large families who have homes destitute of furniture, or who have no home at all for their little ones, can, on applying, after a few simple formalities, have their children lodged and fed for a limited time, on payment of one penny per night for each child, or in exceptional cases, free of all charge whatsoever." It may here be noted that nearly all the cases prove to be exceptional, and that there is no great flow of pennies into the coffers of the Havens.

Still another regulation of the Havens deserves mention, quoting again from the same public notice. "Any mother during her confinement, having no means of supporting or attending to her little ones, can have her children lodged and fed for the time being," on the same favourable terms that is, for the nominal penny a night, which is designed rather to save the applicants from the feeling of being pauperised, than with the expectation of raising a revenue from such a source.

The advantage, to a poor and crowded

neighbourhood, of such offers as these, is abundantly evident. The poor are helped in their most pressing straits, and are left free to struggle for the means of livelihood, while the family can be at once reconstituted, when the immediate pressure is over. Far different is the parochial system of relief under the Poor Laws, when the home must be broken up, and the bread-winners, as well as the helpless ones, incarcerated in a gloomy workhouse. Indeed, it strikes us very strongly that in this matter it is the nation and its legislators which have gone hopelessly astray, and that our hard-working friends in the East have got hold of the right clue, and are truly showing the way out of this terrible labyrinth of misery and woe.

And now what could be in greater contrast with the wet sloppy streets outside, and the miserable couch of stone that awaited the homeless boy or girl, than the warm, well-lighted and ventilated dormitories, with their rows of cosy beds, all ready for their occupants, with their white sheets and bright rugs, and soft pillows, inviting sleep? The wind may howl and the rain patter against the windows; all the more the children may hug themselves that no longer they are exposed to the cold blast and biting rain, with the prospect of a doorstep for a pillow. Some of the little fellows have been put to bed already, not ill, only wearied and exhausted with hardships undergone, little pallid faces, and bright questioning eyes shining from the pillows, but not fretful or complaining, but rather penetrated with a sense of comfort and peace.

Another glimpse is of a lighted dormitory with rows upon rows of neat white beds, but all now tenanted with the tiniest of little girls. The raising of the gaslight raises from the pillows half-a-hundred little heads, not asleep yet or even pretending to be, but calling out in childish glee at the unexpected light and the sight of well-known faces. There are curly heads and lint-white locks, and faces dark and lank; but all seem happy and content, and raise their voices in shrill greeting. Then at a sign from the matron, they are all silent, the light is extinguished, and they are left to their slumbers.

And surely for the sake of a common humanity, these little waifs and strays will find friends and protectors all over the land. There is no possibility, surely, that the work of rescuing the little ones will be left to languish for want of necessary funds.

There can be no question as to the beneficence of the work; the Havens are not surrounded by a costly staff, like our work-houses and prisons. Whatever we contribute to their support, goes directly to the benefit of the little ones. The cost of the maintenance of each child may be put down roughly at five shillings a week, or thirteen pounds a year—add three pounds a year for necessary clothing, and it will be seen at what cost a human soul may be rescued from misery and degradation.

NOT PROFESSIONAL.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II

THE summer was long and hot Dr. Walter found it was as much as he could do to get every day's work well done in the heat and lack of energy which was the result of it. Two or three difficult cases, which he could not leave to anyone else, kept him in town long after the time when he had hoped to get away. He grew very tired, and there was, it seemed to him for the first time, a loneliness and emptiness in his life. He grew to hate the evenings which he spent, chiefly sitting thinking in his room, in the long summer twilight, which is often, when spent in solitude, far more depressing than the gloomiest day in winter; and when at last, late in August, he found himself able to get away, and obliged to decide definitely where to go, he thought he would claim a long-standing invitation given him by some cousins to come to them when he could, and for as long as he liked. He went down to their home in Wiltshire on a Saturday evening, and got out of the train at the pretty little country-station, wondering whether anyone would meet him, and how he should get his luggage taken from the station to his cousin's house, which was, as far as he remembered, about three miles away. He had not more than an instant to wait in uncertainty. Two girls at whom he had looked as the train came in, but without recognising them, came quickly up to him.

"Cousin Tom, this is you, I suppose. It is so long since we met, you know, you must forgive me for having forgotten you—Frank is outside with the carriage. We came in to find you, as he could not leave the horse. This is Kitty, as you will have guessed."

Dr. Walter turned from his elder cousin, in whose bright face he began to recognise the same he had known as much rounder

and more childishly pretty, to the younger and shorter of the two, who was a curious contrast to her sister. She was dark, very dark, with bright, really black eyes, which seemed the centre of the rather coquettish expression of her whole face. Dr. Walter took the hand she gave him, saying smilingly: "Yes, I should have guessed, that's just it. I shouldn't have known, you are both so altered."

"Of course, Tom," said Madge Carlton laughing. "Why, I'm rapidly becoming an old woman. These years haven't altered you so much as I thought at first, though. Is that your portmanteau? Will you make the man bring it to the carriage? Frank will be wondering where we are. Oh, thank you"—as he picked up a red sunshade which fell suddenly—"that is Kitty's. You careless girl, you will lose your belongings some day."

"Very likely," said Kitty nonchalantly, as she took the sunshade from Dr. Walter and thanked him, as it seemed to him, a little carelessly.

They found their brother outside. There was no renewal of acquaintance to be made between him and his cousin, for Frank Carlton was in London at rather frequent intervals, and rarely failed to do what he called "look up" Dr. Walter. Half-an-hour's drive brought them to the pretty, old, red-brick house, covered on one side with roses; white roses which flowered nearly all the summer. Inside the rooms looked cool, hot though the afternoon had been—really rooms to rest in. Dr. Walter found them, not dusty, and full of concentrated hot air like those he had gladly left to his housekeeper's care that morning. And it was evident that his cousins meant that he should rest, and enjoy himself.

Over the tea, which was carried out into the garden, Madge Carlton suggested many plans for the next week, which met with a ready assent from her brother and Kitty. The three had lost their father and mother very early, and the two girls had lived with their brother ever since they had grown up. The next day was Sunday, and in the evening they all strolled across the fields to a tiny village church. They had not gone far on their way back, when they found that Kitty was not, in her usual fashion, slowly coming behind them, making fun of the odds and ends of conversation she could catch. Madge wanted to go back and look for her, but Frank, saying with an irritated tone in his voice, "She'll

turn up, and escorted all right, don't be afraid," made them come home.

They were standing in the drawing-room waiting for supper before Kitty was to be seen in the garden dragging down with her sunshade bits of the climbing roses over the summer-house, while a boy—only the name would have hurt his feelings—gathered them for her. Five minutes later she slipped into her place beside Frank at the supper table, with one of the roses in her dress. The mischievous smile with which she looked up into his face was her only answer to Frank when he said:

"Kitty, you are late again. Was that one of the Vicarage pupils in the garden? I will not have them hanging about like that. You are not to let them walk home with you, unless you make them come into supper reasonably."

After supper, Frank and his cousin went in to the garden to smoke. It was quite dark outside, and the light in the hall made Kitty's figure stand out brilliantly as she stood on the steps under the lamp in one of the red dresses she almost always wore. Wonderfully pretty she looked, with the light on her little piquante brown face, as she called:

"Where are you and Tom, Frank? I'm coming to you for a cigarette, I think."

She came to Dr. Walter's side, and walked up and down with them. The grass grew slippery with dew. Kitty's thin shoes prevented her having a very steady footing, and when Dr. Walter offered his arm she took it laughingly, and every time they came to the end of the walk turned so determinedly back for another turn that Madge at last called to them from the drawing-room window in desperation, to know when they were coming in.

It was too hot on Monday to do anything but sit in the garden with books; much too hot, Kitty declared, to make a call, to pay which, Madge finally had to set out alone.

"Much too sedate and prim for me the Wilsons are," she confided to Dr. Walter. "I never can be sedate, you know."

Dr. Walter laughed, and looked at the little figure beside him, swinging in a hammock in anything but a sedate attitude, with a look not unmingled with admiration.

"They are just Madge's sort of girls," she went on: "very sensible, very good, and——"

"Well, what more do you want?" said Dr. Walter.

Kitty gave one of those smiles that gave her face a look for which bewitching is the only term.

"Oh, you can answer that for yourself to-morrow. They will go with us for the water picnic, and you can study them all day and tell me."

Dr. Walter did not have much chance or much time, however, to study anyone but Kitty during the long day which they spent either on the river or lounging on the banks. He found none of it so pleasant as the hour he spent lying on the grass smoking, under a tree, with Kitty sitting on one of its very lowest branches tormentingly throwing at him bits of stick and anything else she could find.

He returned them at intervals, when he felt energetic enough; and Kitty's face, as she laughingly and skilfully defended herself with her hat, and threw more at him "to teach him to aim better," was fascinating enough to make him fail to realise how late it was growing. The damp grass, and the fact that the voices of the others began to sound far away, made him suddenly jump up with an exclamation at the lateness of the hour, to which Kitty answered:

"Oh, didn't you know that? I did. Madge called us a quarter of an hour ago; but I thought it wasn't good for her to have what she wanted so quickly, and I didn't answer. They've only walked on to the inn, you know, for the carriages. Come along, we shall be comfortably in time to get into one of them, which is the great thing," and she slipped her hand into his arm as they walked up the bank leading into the dark plantation.

Dr. Walter took the little brown hand and drew it farther into his arm. He was beginning to feel "Kitty's ways," as her friends called them, very fascinating.

The days slipped away so quickly and so pleasantly for Dr. Walter, that the end of a fortnight found him most unwilling even to think that he must soon go back to his work. But by way of making himself realise that it must be so, he said one morning at breakfast that he ought to be back with his patients again.

Frank and Madgeremonstrated, of course, and Kitty struck in hastily:

"Well, Frank, you must let us give that dance you promised, and then, Tom, you must stay for it, and that will be a little longer."

Dr. Walter lifted his eyes to meet Kitty's across the table, looking at him from

under her dark lashes with what seemed to him a very entreating glance. He liked dancing, and the thought of watching Kitty's thorough enjoyment was decidedly attractive. He could not resist it, so he said:

"Well, since you are determined to make me hopelessly idle and dissipated, I must give in. I can arrange for a few more days."

"Well, Madge, to-morrow week. Will that do, do you think?" cried Kitty, her eager face looking prettier than ever as she leaned on the table, playing with the sugar-tongs. "If you don't seize the opportunity, Frank will change his mind and say we can't have it. Frank,"—turning to him hastily—"who will you ask down here for it? Any of the men we had in the winter? Mind they're men who can dance—who won't want to shoot all day and pretend they're tired in the evening."

"Well, I'll promise you they shall be useful as well as ornamental, Kitty," said Frank. "Madge, I suppose you could find room for four?"

"Yes, certainly. Who will you ask?"

"Well, Marsham Brown certainly, and perhaps, Jack and Charlie Graham: you'll see to the people about here; if we must we must, and you'll make it go all right;" with a smiling, confident look at his elder sister, on whose powers of arrangement he knew he might depend. So to Kitty's enthusiastic delight, which she showed by hanging round Frank's neck till he laughingly shook her off, it was settled.

Frank's guests arrived on the evening before the dance. The one of whom he had spoken—Mr. Marsham Brown—had stayed with them before, but not for some time.

Kitty announced at breakfast next day, that she should be far too busy to have any tennis or to "waste any time in the garden," as she put it.

Dr. Walter looked, what he felt, disappointed, but he determined to spend the day in a walk to a ruin near, which he had long wished to see.

It was a lovely early-autumn day, with that curious, heavy stillness over everything which is, after a little while, almost saddening.

The wonder which came to Dr. Walter about the middle of the day, as to what the lively household he had left behind were likely to be doing, was followed by a sigh, when he thought of the life to which he must so soon go back. The weary

sense of loneliness which had weighed on him before he left town, and which he had hoped was the result of physical and mental fatigue, only came upon him now more strongly than ever. His work, of course, was there, and he told himself that it was and must be quite enough for him. But to-day there seemed a sort of background of dreariness—dreary evenings and mornings—the thought of which he did not like to face; and for the first time, rather to his own surprise, it struck him that a wife might make everything very different for him. With the thought of a lady's presence in those dark dusty rooms of his, suddenly Kitty's bright ways and looks came before him. He wondered if she could alter his lonely life for him; if, were he to ask her, she would bring into his life, which seemed to him to-day terribly empty and dull, that indefinable something which it wanted.

He went on and on, forgetting the object of his walk altogether—all his thoughts were taken up with this new idea which had come to him. Finally he thought he would try to find out, perhaps that evening, if Kitty were really able to do all this for him.

It was late when he got in. Madge was in the drawing-room, and gave him tea before he went up to dress. When he came down again an hour later, it had grown nearly dark, and coming out of the dim passage he could not see when he first pushed aside the curtain over the doorway who was in the drawing-room, only one end of which was as yet lighted. In another moment he saw under the lamp Kitty, dressed, with a garnet necklace round her pretty neck, which caught the light in flashes as she moved. Mr. Marsham Brown was standing beside her, an empty box in his hand. Her pretty head was bent over the white flowers she was fastening carefully into the front of her dress. Neither of them saw Dr. Walter, and the strong sweet scent of the violets came to him at the same moment as he heard Kitty say:

"Violets, too, which no one else will have—I don't know how to thank you—you know how I like them—from you."

She lowered her voice to say the last few words, and looked up into the face of the man who gazed so admiringly at her, with a look that evidently meant much to him. Dr. Walter turned abruptly from where he stood just inside the doorway, and went straight out through the open hall door into the darkest of the garden paths.

He no longer saw Kitty or the drawing-room; the scent of the flowers had brought back to him another room, and another woman with white violets in her dress—a woman whom he suddenly longed to see with an overpowering longing. How had he been so foolish, such an idiot? Love Kitty! marry Kitty! Why had he not known all these months what he knew with sudden certainty now, that Mary Chaston's love was the only thing that could fill up the want in his life? He felt all at once as if it was impossible to get through the hours which must pass before he could tell her so—for tell her he must, whatever she said in answer.

Up and down the grass he walked, and when he went in to meet Frank's inquiries as to "what in the world he had been doing to make him so late?" he had to put some force on himself to make his answer coherent, and his conversation to the girls he danced with either sensible or amusing.

He made one of the letters which he found when he came down the next day, an excuse for leaving his cousins that afternoon, in spite of their remonstrances.

Yet, when he reached home, a feeling, that he could not define, made him wait till nearly the evening of the day after, before he went to her. He walked slowly towards her house, though he would not let himself think of what he would say; he wanted what she had to give too much to think how he would ask for it. He went up into the same room in which he had seen her before, and waited a moment or two before Mary Chaston came to him. She had only just come in and was wearing her hat still. Rather surprised he fancied she looked, but she only apologised for keeping him waiting and said smilingly: "Did you like that book I lent you? You never told me when you sent it back. Are you come to prove you did by letting me lend you another of his?"

"No," he answered, "that isn't what I want." Something in his voice apparently prevented her from speaking lightly again; for saying quickly that it was very chilly and that she should indulge in a fire, she threw off her hat and, taking a matchbox from the mantel-shelf, knelt down and lit it herself.

Dr. Walter watched her firm hands for the moment she did it, and longed to take them into his own, but he waited till she rose and stood facing him, with one hand resting on the mantel-piece, to say:

"No. I have come to ask you a question

which I hardly know how to put into any words. You have shown me what life ought to be; will you come into mine and help me to live it? Will you love me?"

She had turned towards the fire at his first word—her fingers tightened over the tiny ornament she held, with a grasp which grew every instant more intense, and Dr. Walter could see how she was trembling. Still her face was turned away, and she said nothing until—at last—he very gently touched the hand nearest him with his own, when she suddenly turned, held out both hands and lifted her face to his, only to hide it again the next instant, but this time on his shoulder, as she said: "Will I?—I do love you."

VILLENELLE.

In the wood walks alone,
With the sad dying year,
While the winds sob and moan,
And the dead leaves are thrown
Dry, drifted, and sere,
In the wood walks alone.
The old days we have known
All unstained by a tear,
While the winds sob and moan,
Dressed in seeming long gone,
Hover living and near,
In the wood walks alone.
The great branches groan
Like to mortals in fear,
While the winds sob and moan;
For the months are laid prone
On their black, sodden bier,
In the wood walks alone,
While the winds sob and moan.

A NORTHUMBRIAN FORTRESS.

THERE is a story told of a North-country parson who, making a purchase in Watling Street, London, amazed the salesman who asked him if he could send the parcel anywhere, by answering:

"Yes, if you like to send it, you may. I live in this street; but I don't want to pay the carriage."

"Pay the carriage!" exclaimed the dealer, "there won't be any carriage to pay if, as you say, you live in our street."

"Well," said the jocular parson, "I do live on the Watling Street, two hundred and eighty miles away, in the county of Durham."

In the same way the writer, arriving at the lone Northumbrian fortress which is the subject of this paper, astonished one of the few occupants of the place, who asked him whence he came, by replying:

"From Rochester, on the Watling

Street, about three hundred and twenty miles off."

"But this is Rochester, and the Watling Street runs yander," said the native wonderingly, and could only be made clear on the subject by the production of a map and the indication of our Kentish Rochester on the southern extremity of the same old Roman road.

High Rochester, our lone fortress, stands in the midst of a wild, sequestered country, so full of historic, and legendary, and romantic interest, that it seems strange that in this all-exploring age, it should remain an almost unknown country, except to that most intelligent, industrious, and enthusiastic body of gentlemen, the Northumbrian antiquaries.

Yet so it is. The nearest railway station is ten miles away; but within half-a-mile of it runs the direct coach-road from Newcastle to Jedburgh in Scotland—the same old road along which Sir Henry Percy marched with his nine thousand men, on the eve of that fatal Saint Oswald's Day, 1388, to wrest from the proud Douglas the pennon which the latter had won from him under the walls of the "canny toon." Yet visitors are few and far between; and lonely, and all but deserted, the old fortress stands on its quadrangular eminence, once the most important Roman stronghold in the North—now a poor shadow of its former self.

To the explorer who arrives at the southern gateway, or, rather, at the huge stones which represent it, after having tramped mile after mile along that famous old Watling Street, so irritatingly straight, yet with a fascination of its own, High Rochester does not seem to present many objects of interest. He finds himself in the midst of a quadrangle, two sides of which are occupied by commonplace-looking farm-buildings, and the other two sides open to every wind which blows.

Twenty years ago, we are told, on the site of the present cottages, there still remained two very perfect specimens of the old Borderland domestic fortress, known as "Pele Towers." For, after the last Roman legionary had hurried away homewards to protect his own enervated and decaying metropolis, it was not likely that so strategically perfect a position, commanding the main road and on the foeman's border, should long remain unnoticed and unappropriated. All is so perfectly calm and peaceful here on this fair October morning, that it is hard to realise what terrible scenes

must have been enacted in and about this old quadrangle of half-hidden stones, during the centuries which followed the Roman exodus from Bremenium. Britons and Saxons must have fought many a bloody fight for its possession ere the days of Border warfare between Englishman and Scot set in; and, as if to preserve the tradition of bloodshed associated with the place, High Rochester—we are informed by an old Mutiny veteran who lives in one of the cottages—after the final extinguishing of Border war, became the local place of execution, and even now is sometimes spoken of as Gallows Hill.

Many and many a death-fray must have rolled up and down the slopes of the green fell on which the stalwart shepherd now watches his flock, and along that old causeway now merely marked by a bank, and in and about that triple line of ditch and vallum, which guards the fortress on the north; when Redesdale turned out to greet Teviotdale, or Liddesdale, or, as often as not, when, in default of any other foe-man, one Redesdale clan fought with another—Hall against Potter, Hedley against Fletcher, Reed against Charlton. The old walls of the fortress have, of course, suffered from the ravages of eighteen centuries, but still more from the hand of man, who found in them excellent building material, as the village of Rochester itself down below on the road, and every wall and shepherd's cottage in the neighbourhood, testify. But here and there, amidst the luxuriant undergrowth we may still admire the skill of the old Roman builders, in the lines of evenly squared, firmly set stones, whilst with the superposition of a few stones we may almost build the western gate as it was. The corners of the camp, it may be noted, are rounded. On the hills west of the little burn which runs at the foot of the eminence are the extensive remains of another camp, probably a summer fortress; and about a mile eastward, along the course of the Watling Street, are traces of a cemetery, from which several circular and ornamental "cippi" have been unearthed.

We have only to look at the map and to take into consideration the physical peculiarities of the surrounding country, to appreciate the importance attached by the Roman generals to the fortress of Bremenium. It commanded what was then the only road to Scotland, where the chief danger lay, in this part of the country; for, although there was probably always a track

over the Carter Fell that also ran within a few hundred yards of the fortress, and was easily defended, and all around was either pathless morass or wild fell, admirably adapted for the swift, silent, and hidden movements of the barbarians who, without an outlying fort as an obstacle, and as a means of keeping up communication, could easily sweep down upon Hadrian's Wall, some five and twenty miles to the south. Moreover, between High Rochester and the Cheviot Hills, were, at least, three other camps—one still retains the name, "Ad Fines;" a second is of trapezoid shape near the Cottonshope burn; and the third was just out of High Rochester. Along the line of these camps, intelligence of an invasion could pass far swifter by the sound, solid Watling Street to Rochester, and thence to the Wall, than could an invading army get over the Carter, and along the rough native track.

Hence High Rochester occupied to Roman Britain in this part of the country, much the same position that Dover has always occupied on the southern coast—that of a sentinel and a base of communication. But with Rochester taken, the invaders would have gone on, only to find another hard nut to crack at Habitancum, near the modern hideous little village of Woodburn, not to speak of camps on almost every prominent fell-top. But we imagine Rochester to have been well-nigh impregnable, if we may judge by the character of its remains and its outlying defences.

But after all, perhaps, to the romantic explorer the greatest interest of High Rochester lies in the country immediately around it.

If we follow the line of hills running in a south-easterly direction, past the gaunt mass of Shittlehugh Pele Tower, we reach a spot almost sacred to all lovers of our old English ballad literature—the field of Otterburn.

Near the Greenchester Farm are lines of earthworks—erroneously, we are told, considered to be Roman, although we confess to having held that belief—said to mark the Scottish camp which Sir Henry Percy surprised whilst its occupants were at supper. But the centre of the battle was further off, just about where Otterburn Castle now stands; and, to reach the most interesting spot of all, we must descend to the road near the National Schools, and enter a small plantation.

Here, amidst appropriate surroundings

in the shape of battered, ragged, ever-moaning pines, stands a rude stone monument. Here, tradition says, lies the body of the fierce Douglas, and here was enacted that pathetic incident when the victor, Lord Percy, took the dead man by the hand, and paid an unaffected tribute of regret to the chivalrous hero, whose name still clings to the monument. The very loneliness of the situation, the very neglect apparent, lend a charm to this old-world relic which we feel would be lacking were more fuss made about it. If Douglas Cross were within reach of London, it would be formally paled round; the grass at its foot kept trim and neat; the very stone itself probably touched up and titivated, and a charge made for admission to view; but here its simplicity; its undisguised antiquity; the utter informality of the approach which is by a winding path through shin-deep grass, adapt themselves exactly to the feelings inspired by a recollection of the glorious old story of its why and wherefore.

Pursuing our course along the road we arrive at the pretty little village of Otterburn, a famous angling centre, but otherwise as unobtrusive and unremarkable a place as one could look for.

Yet we are here in the heart of Redesdale, not very many years ago the wildest and most lawless district in England, the inhabitants of which bore such an evil reputation for their poaching, drinking, gambling, and fighting habits, that amongst the ancient Corporation statutes of Newcastle is one which forbids any employer taking as apprentice a native of Redesdale or Tynedale. The modern inhabitants, who follow purely pastoral and agricultural pursuits, are remarkable for their steadiness, their religious tendencies, and, above all, for their high standard of education; and it is hard to believe that they are the lineal descendants of such wild outlaws until we find that the old clan names still exist, and that in many cases properties have not changed hands for centuries.

About half a mile due west from Otterburn, on the Watling Street, is Troughend Hall, associated with another ballad almost as famous as that of the Battle of Otterburn—namely, the Story of Percy Reed.

Percy Reed, of Troughend Hall or Tower, as it was then called, was a sort of warden for this part of Redesdale, and in his magisterial capacity had hung a notorious freebooter from the Scottish side, by name Crosier. Thereupon, as was the genial

custom of those days when the quarrel of one man was taken up by all his relatives, a feud was sworn against Reed of Troughend by the Crosiers.

One morning Percy Reed went out to hunt, accompanied by three neighbours of the name of Hall, from Girsonsfield. At Batinghope, "when the sun was sinking low," they halted to rest, and Percy Reed went to sleep. Whilst asleep, five of the Crosiers, burning for revenge, came up. The Halls awakened Percy; but he found that, during his sleep, they had

Stown the bridle off his steed,
And they've put water in his lang gun;
They've fixed his sword within the sheath,
That out again it winna come.

and, to add to their treachery, they refused to help him, so that he was killed by the Crosiers. Long after this event the Hall family were known in Redesdale as "the fause Ha's of Girsonsfield"; and there may be some now who believe that the ghost of Percy Reed still walks the banks of Pringle Haugh burn.

Elishaw was a noted rendezvous of gipsies; and Wully Faa, the gipay King, here held wild and lawless court, when the authorities over the Border made Kirk-Yetholm, the gipsy-centre, too hot for him. Here, too, when Lord Cranshoun was owner of the place, Wull Allen, and his still more famous son, Jamie, bewitched the native ear with the strains of the Northumbrian bagpipes; but for their skill in music, as well as in angling, readers may be referred to the old "Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel." It may be remarked here that in no manner can a stranger more deeply offend a patriotic Northumbrian than by confounding the bagpipes of his country with those of the Scottish Highlanders; and we have heard that great umbrage was given some time ago when the pipers of the Northumberland Militia were arrayed in the large Scottish shepherd's plaid instead of the small white and black check plaid of the old Tosson pattern.

Northward from High Rochester stretch the glorious fells, which so charm the South-countryman by their complete realisation of the phrase, "romantic solitude." In them are blended the grandeur and wildness of the Devonshire moorland; the historic romance of the chalk uplands of Wiltshire and Berkshire; and the sweet open breeziness of the Sussex South Downs, combined with other characteristics—the outcome of climate.

He who scorns the aid of the pocket compass is very soon brought to his reckoning here, for one may wander hour after hour without seeing a sign of human life; and, indeed, almost shut away from life of any kind but that of the wild birds. Yet there are abundant evidences that once these moorland solitudes must have been fairly well populated. Road tracks run across the short, crisp grass, which are still used, but which were traced long before the first stone was laid of High Rochester Fortress.

On hill-tops innumerable we may note the circular outlines of old British towns and settlements, strange, colossal remains, which still preach to us sermons on the mutability of human greatness, with examples drawn from a long-past dead life. Earthworks, religious circles, cairns, and barrows abound; and so utter is the silence that the most unsentimental of explorers must, amidst such surroundings, be impressed with the feeling of travelling through a dead world.

Small wonder, then, that the land has an enormous spiritual population of ghosts, elves, and fairies. Not that the inhabitants themselves have an atom of sentiment or poetry in their composition. They are far too hard-headed and practical for such possessions, and their universally high standard of education has made them thinkers rather than dreamers; but old traditions and legends die hard in a land to which, as yet, metropolitan influences have scarcely penetrated, and so the old stories are told more from habit than credulity; and, little as the narrator believes in them himself, it is not always wise for the stranger to express his unbelief in too contemptuous terms.

Amongst the many extraordinary changes wrought amongst this stalwart, industrious people in a comparatively short space of time has been the complete burying of the hatchet of war between them and their neighbours over the Border. And this is the more remarkable, when we remember that for many hundreds of years the differences and distinctions between the Englishman on one side of the Carter Fell, and the Scotsman on the other, were more strong than are the differences and distinctions between the modern Saxon and the modern Irishman. Inter-marriages and constant commercial intercourse have blended the two peoples at this point so that there is as much Scottish as Northumbrian in the dialect spoken, and as

many Scottish as English names on shop-fronts and cart-boards. Some sparks of the old international rivalry may break forth at the annual games held at Wooler and Kirk-Yetholm, and "Jeddart," when the "wrestlin'" comes on; but there are none of those petty rivalries, and jealousies, and spites, which we would imagine must survive so many years of constant warfare; and the stranger should be very careful not to ridicule things Scottish in Redesdale nor things English over the Cheviots. One social feature—a very pleasant one—still survives as a characteristic as much of the present as of the past, the strict observance of the laws of hospitality. No student of the past need be told that even during the darkest and bloodiest periods of Border warfare, the stranger who asked for shelter and food, no matter who he was, was never turned from the gates, in obedience to a law as sacred amongst the wild Borderers as it is amongst the desert Arabs of to-day.

So it is now in Redesdale. The writer has tramped hundreds of miles, in all directions, over the country lying north of the Roman Wall, and in no single case, except, of course, when the house was an inn, was payment accepted from him for the bread and cheese and milk, or whisky, set before him. This rule obtains alike in the lowliest shepherd's hut and the substantial farmhouse. Another remarkable feature in the local character is the almost universal intelligence concerning matters historic or antiquarian. As a rule, in Kent or Sussex, the visitor knows more about the local ruin, or camp, than the oldest inhabitant, whose stereotyped reply to questions generally takes the form of "Dunno, sir, I'm sure," and who cannot for the life of him conceive what possible interest, for anyone, there can be in a line of entrenchments, or a bit of crumbling masonry, or a curious church. But in our northernmost counties it is very different. Our guide over the Field of Otterburn was a giant from the plough-tail, but he knew all about the famous fight, and if he did exaggerate the English prowess a little it was pardonable in a man, hundreds of whose ancestors had, perhaps, fallen beneath claymore and Lochaber axe.

We had remarked the same local interest in local history during a pilgrimage, a few days previously, along the Roman Wall, from Newcastle to Bowness on the Solway, and we found it a few days after on Flodden Field. As for country clergy-

men, squires, and men of education, they are almost, without exception, enthusiasts; and no expenditure of time or trouble is deemed by them too great to show and explain to the stranger what is locally interesting; so that, if the explorer misses points of interest, it is certainly not the fault of those in whose country he finds himself.

THE CONTENTED MIND.

SOME years ago, a great philosopher blew a loud and clanging blast upon his trumpet, declaring that, but for the tendency towards discontent, men would never have emerged from the brute condition, provoking by this utterance of his a long-continued and clattering tattoo on the drum ecclesiastic in reply. Then followed a long and brain-perplexing succession of Replies, and Rejoinders, and Last Words, and More Last Words, and Symposiums, and other terrible weapons of printed dialectic. I never read more than the titles of any of them, and I should probably have gone down to my grave without further illumination in the matter, if the divine under whom I regularly sit had not taken upon himself one Sunday to bring in his morsel to the collation of controversy. "The man who could talk in such a strain about the virtue of contentment," he affirmed, "must be an Infidel. There was no reason why an Infidel should speak Truth, rather than Falsehood; therefore the whole of the professor's contention was necessarily false." The conclusion, I fancied, might not be found to flow naturally from the premises, if subjected to a severe examination; but it sounded splendidly when given out from the security of the pulpit. I had a lurking idea that there was a bit of the truth hidden away somewhere under the crude outside of the professor's utterance; and it puzzled me rather to fathom the cause of the fury with which the clerical mind was, in this instance, affected. At last it came into my remembrance how, when I was a little boy, I once firmly believed that "money is the root of all evil," because I had written out the above sentiment some hundred times, as a writing exercise. Doubtless, I reasoned, the reverend gentleman, in his school days, was once condemned to write out as an imposition, the maxim, "A contented mind is a continual feast," and has ever since suffered from an exaggerated reverence for the so-called virtue of contentment.

As I turned the matter over in my mind, I soon came to the conclusion that the professor had not spoken a bit too strongly. I felt likewise that he might have given his message sooner to the world. Preachers and poets have had things too much their own way, and have gone on preaching and singing the blessings of contentment till man has learnt to regard it as the most precious heritage he possesses. Contentment has established itself firmly as a virtue in our domestic sanctuaries, and has become a word of power in the mouths of parents and guardians counselling wisdom; but, somehow, their counsel does not seem to strike deep. Englishmen are not remarkable for letting things be as they are. Most of them, perhaps unconsciously, take the professor's view rather than the preacher's. If it be not so, how is it that the grumbling Englishman has become a proverbial personage? How is it that the Anglo-Saxon race, instead of resting within the bounds of its tight little island, has overflowed to the uttermost parts of the earth?

With such as these, the uncomfortable stimulants of adversity have, no doubt, operated to minimise any prejudices in favour of contentment; but I can call to mind a dozen instances of men who might surely be content to run along smoothly in the groove into which they have been dropped by Fortune, but who, instead, beat their wings incessantly against the gilded bars of their cages.

To show how deep-seated this tendency to rebel against their surroundings is in some natures, I will quote the case of my friend Philip. Philip was born of good old yeoman stock. His forefathers of the past three or four generations—prudent men living in good times—had added field to field, until the estate, which lay round about their comfortable house, was as large as that of many of the duly recognised squires, and in incomparably better order. His people, with the old-fashioned pride of their class, shrank resolutely from anything like an upward move into the social grade above them; but Philip, when he came into his inheritance, found himself, from the operation of various causes, in a position differing widely from that occupied by any of his predecessors.

To begin with, he was an only child—the child, moreover, of an ambitious mother. No member of the family had ever yet gone to the University; but Philip was sent to Oxford, where his

career was most satisfactory. He acquired enough of learning to make him wish for more, and thus qualified himself for that life which, in the judgement of many, is the happiest of all—a life of lettered ease. He succeeded early to his inheritance, and soon after married. Two fair children were born to him, and then came the one adverse stroke that Fortune ever dealt him—his young wife was taken from him by death. For a season it seemed to him that his whole life was wrecked; but, great as was his loss, it did not fall upon him without compensation. Some natures a heavy grief will deform and mar; others it will refine and stimulate to mount to higher and serener regions of being; and Philip, happily for himself, had been fashioned in the latter mould. He left his home for a time, seeking consolation in foreign travel, in the world of books, and in the society of his more sympathetic friends. In his travels he followed the model of the "grand tour," rather than that of the contemporary personally conducted. He lingered as long as he liked in any place which took his fancy, and he spent his time in acquiring the language, and exploring the literature, and not in chattering tourist commonplace with chance English folk at the hotels, and in visiting the stock-sights as a matter of duty. He came back with a well-stored mind, and an intense craving for literary employment, and possible future fame; so he bought his bottle of ink and ream of paper, and set to work. After receiving a few of the rebuffs which are the almost inevitable fate of those who offer such wares as he had on hand, he secured a position as occasional contributor to a periodical, the reputation of which stood high enough to allow any of its staff to speak of his dealings therewith without any ring of apology.

Since this start he has written a novel, which had a marked success; he has brought out a play which ran for fifty nights; and he has published a volume of essays which were the talk of the town, on account of their freshness and vigour. His children are delightful in every way. He has a neat little home in Mayfair, to which he betakes himself in the winter and spring, when the ways are miry, and the trees bare in the Midlands. He has friends in plenty, and of the sort he cares for at every turn. He lives as well as he wants on two-thirds of his income. If he liked he could marry anyone of half-a-dozen

charming women of his acquaintance; and yet, with all these good gifts, Philip, like a certain popular comedian, is not happy.

In quoting the case of Philip, I feel I am putting a sharp word into the hand of any possible adversary. Here I am bringing out a man blessed far beyond the mean of worldly beatitude, and unhappy, notwithstanding. I may be told how much better it would have been for him had he been mulcted of two-thirds of his good fortune, and, in exchange, have been endowed with that contented mind which has proved such a priceless possession in numberless cases. Philip, in short, is debarred from the continual feast because he has not the contented mind.

Before giving judgement in the matter, it may be well to consider whether this strain of discontent, in giving to Philip's life a shade of unhappiness, may not perhaps have made a better man of him than he would have been had he been gifted to the full with the contented mind, and tasted the continual feast amid such surroundings as wait upon the average country gentleman. The chief dishes in this banquet, I take it, would have been his enrolment in the Commission of the Peace for the county, and the numerous most useful, though not very elevating, duties appertaining to the office. He would have tempered justice with mercy at the meetings of the Board of Guardians. He might have taken to farming in a small way, and have learnt how gentlemen in his position are always expected to buy in the dearest market, and sell in the cheapest. He would have become a diligent reader of the county paper; less anxious to open the "Times," a day old; and possibly quite ignorant of such high-class journals as the "Plain Liver" and the "High Thinker." On the walls of his library most likely would have been ranged "Hume and Smollet's History," "The British Essayist," "Alison's Europe," "The Works of Josephus," and many other volumes of light and entertaining reading. What a contrast is this ideal picture to the reality of his dainty library in C—Street! There we shall find a few of the philosophic historians and certain volumes of religious controversy; but if we are to forecast the dominant mood of Philip from the contents of his bookshelves, we shall decide that it is in agreement with those poets, essayists, and critics, who maintain that such controversy brings with it an atmosphere which they cannot breathe. I often

wonder whether Philip, though he goes regularly to church, has joined the ranks of those who are sure of nothing; and, if he has, whether this adhesion is the cause of his discontent.

As many people rate happiness, Philip, no doubt, would have been happier had he stuck altogether to his garden and his magisterial duties, and brought nothing else away from Oxford except the letters which he might, when he so willed, write after his name. But when we begin to theorise about happiness, we must not forget that Mr. Carlyle has left us thirty volumes full of exhortation that man was not sent into the world to be happy, but to be good; to polish himself as near perfection as possible, so as to be meet to stand as a worthy stone in the great temple of humanity.

Once, when paying a visit to my friend at his house in the country, I spent some portion of my time in investigating certain details of life in Arcady; details which I could scarcely master by merely looking out of the study windows of the Manor House at the pretty village grouped at the bottom of the pasture. From the reports of certain Special Commissioners I had been led to believe that contentment no longer reigned in Arcady, and I resolved to see for myself how far the story of this new progress of discontent might be true.

On the outskirts of the village, on the face of a hill, with a lovely view over the winding valley beneath and the wooded rise beyond, stood an old thatched cottage, one of the few which had escaped the hand of the sanitary reformer. It was in fairly good repair; a pretty garden, with honeysuckles and hollyhocks, beehives and poultry, all after the pattern of ideal cottages, lay round it. It was, indeed, by far the most picturesque object I met with in my walks abroad; and every time I pass it, I noticed a venerable old man with snowy hair and a peaceful countenance, sitting in a sunny corner, with his hands folded on the top of his stick, clad in a real smock frock, and evidently on the look-out for a gossip with any passer-by who might have the time to spare for a chat.

I soon became on speaking terms with Robin Dykes—for so was the old man called—and our conversation invariably followed the lines of the life and adventures of Robin Dykes, his past experiences, and his present condition; varied now and then by anecdotes of the sayings and

doings of other and more venturesome spirits, who had been companions of his youth. Many an hour did I spend with Robin; and it will be almost necessary to add that I heard all his stories afresh at each sitting. It was, as he rambled along, that I first conceived the idea of investigating the claims of Content to be numbered amongst the virtues. Robin was blessed with the contented mind; and, so complex is the working of human nature, he was at the same time profoundly discontented that every one else was not contented. Thus either from Content or Discontent, he managed to get a bite at the continual feast; and I would be the last to grumble or to try and sweep away his very frugal banquet by calling to life desires after something more elevated. "*Quieta non movere*," is a maxim which should possess some sanctity now and then, even to the most ardent reformer; and in cases like that of Robin Dykes I am quite willing to let things run along as they were. I merely wish to enter a humble protest against the once glorification of Content, and will try to show that a world, made of people who talk and think like Robin Dykes, would not be a profitable or a pleasant world to live in.

Without much trouble I managed to extract from Robin his notions of the theory of life, and to realise what things he had classed as good, and what as bad, in his journey through life. In spite of his views as to contentment, my old friend was by no means free from the common belief of elders, holding that things in general were in a very poor way compared with what he remembered when he was a young fellow.

"There don't 'pear to be no life a-sturrin' about these parts nowadays, sir, like as there was when I was a young chap. My Uncle Ben—him as lay o' the left-hand side o' the church path as you go in—he wur' the master-boy for a bit o' fun, he wur'. Why, I ha' heard him say as he wur' summoned afor' the bench at Willford nine times in one year for gettin' drunk. And his son, Black Ben they called him, did more nor his father, and got sent away to Botany Bay; and they do tell me that his son is now a rich man, with as many sheep as would reach from here to Hardleham Church, if you put 'em all in a line. But, lawk-a-massy, folks tell such a sight o' lies nowadays, that there's no believin' 'em; and, even if 't be true, young Ben had better ha' been at home a-drivin' of a

team o' horses on the land; for what's the good of havin' a lot o' sheep, if a man ha' got to live in Australey, and get eaten up by the Blacks, perhaps. And then there was allus lots o' poachin' a goin' on: and my Uncle Ben used to do a tidy stroke o' that. He was one o' that party o' young chaps as took all Squire Bullin's pheasants out of the long wood down yonder the night afore they was to be shot. The keepers, they was there; but they never expected such a strong party, else they wouldn't ha' showed fight. Tim Belden, the head keeper, got a crack o' the skull as he never got over; and Harry Thompson, one o' the poachin' chaps, got his thigh broke with tumblin' into a clay pit, and was on the parish thirty years and more. They beat the keepers off and got a matter o' two hundred pheasants, and sold 'um to a fellow as drove a fish cart, 'twixt Settleby and Barton Crown. The game all went to Lunnion by coach, and my Uncle Ben and the other chaps was drunk off and on for a fortnight with the money they earned that night. Ah, sir, young fellows don't get chances like that nowadays. The place 'pears to be asleep, and there's nothin' stirrin'."

To hint to Robin Dykes that any benefit had flowed from the operation of any one of the numerous Acts of Parliament, with which our legislators are trying to coddle our rural population all through the seven ages, was like showing a red rag to a bull. The remembrance of life, as it was in his prime, furnished him with an ideal; and, knowing of nothing more to his taste, and caring not to search, he wanted all men to be ground in the same mill as he himself had passed through.

"Why can't they let us alone? We don't interfere wi' them. There must be rich folks and poor folks," was his comment on every fresh act of administrative activity.

In the days when I first met him, the educational authorities in the rural districts had not been stimulated into full operation; but even then, they had done enough to provoke Robin's criticism, and some of his remarks on what he called "skewlin'" were very comical:

"A boy may learn to read his book, sir; but that on't fill his belly nor teach him how to manage a hoss. There's that boy Tom, my grandson. I got him put on under Bill Emery, Mr. Morton's head team man; but he hadn't been there a week afore Mr. Morton came to me, and he said,

said he: 'Robin, that there boy Tom is no better nor a fool.' 'Well, sir,' I said, said I, 'that ain't to be wondered at. How should the poor boy know anything, seein' as he ha' been at skewle all his life?'"

One day I tried to get out of Robin a good word on behalf of a new row of very pretty cottages which my friend had just built after the most approved plan; but I might as well have talked to the Rock of Gibraltar.

"Model cottages they call 'em." Robin pronounced the obnoxious adjective something like "muddle," and I fancied afterwards it might have been a grim joke of his. "I wish them as built 'em had to sleep in 'em. I lodged for a year or more in one of 'em along o' my son-in-law, and I was almost fruz to death with cold, 'cos the squire had made a rule as all three o' the rooms should be occupied. So I and the boys slept in one, and the galls in another, and my darter and her husband in the other; but when the winter came on there was no standin' the cold, and we all had to git together again as we did in the old cottage. Ah, sir, they make a sight o' fuss about new things; but when you come to be as old as I am, you'll see as the old 'uns will beat 'em holler."

"You're a stayin' at the Manor, ain't you, sir? Master Philip is a tidy young chap; but, Lord, you should ha' seen his grandfather. He was a sharp man o' business; but fond of a frolic, for all that. I don't suppose as he ever cum back from Settleby Market sober; and one year he rode two hosses to death with the hounds. He didn't waste his time goin' to college and readin' books like this young chap; but folks ain't the same nowadays, as they was forty years ago."

And so Robin would "moral on the times," and pass his remarks on all the whole range of the social state that lay within his narrow ken. Robin was, it is true, but a leaf in the breeze, a straw on the stream; but his discourse may serve as a fair sample of what comes, if the virtue of contentment be intemperately pursued. His was the contented mind of the maxim which men praise in such unthinking, meaningless fashion. If a parallel mood had reigned in the beginning of things, it is doubtful whether life would ever have burst the limits of the primordial molecule. Certainly, if at Robin's birth all men had stood upon the same lines as his own, the social conditions set forth

and commended by the poor old man in such artless wise would still be raging around us unchecked. It will not serve for the contemporary preachers and teachers of contentment to affirm that, if they had lived and worked amongst those shocking surroundings which gave no offence to Robin Dykes, they would have gone in for discontent themselves, and lifted up their voices to cry for reform.

With this bent of mind, which proclaims itself in all their utterances, the argument in favour of "*laissez faire*" would have swayed them just as strongly then as now. The contrast of the better and purer state of things in which we now live—the harvest, as it were, of discontent—would not have been at hand to throw up the squalor of their surrounding conditions, and to shock their consciences into reforming activity, and they themselves would have cried out with Robin, "Why can't they let us alone?"

Robin is now near the end of his pilgrimage, so he may be left in peace; the hour when he might have been with profit stimulated into discontent, struck long ago; but it will hardly do for us to act after the spirit of his favourite maxim in directing the footsteps of those who are just setting out on their life's journey.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER III.—RIVER GATE.

CANON PERCIVAL, in his own line, was a much cleverer and wiser man than Colonel Ward pretended to think him.

He was by no means a fool: he had a remarkable faculty for sticking to his point and having his own way. He had done everything he wanted to do in life, so far. The authorities of his college were reasonably proud of him, and had given him one of their best livings, Saint Martha's, in the city of Woolsborough; a canonry in the Cathedral had followed. He had married early in life, carrying off a prize, whom two at least of his friends envied him. He had pleasant manners, and managed his Curates and his parish very well; he was also very friendly with his brethren of the Chapter. Some evil-disposed people laughed at him, though he was a good-looking, dignified man;

perhaps because he was a little too dignified sometimes, and they said he was ambitious, and wanted to be a Bishop. There were also people who disliked and distrusted him; no one, perhaps, liked him heartily; and yet no one had anything really to say against him.

He was not a rich man; but he was careful and prudent, and managed to live very comfortably in his beautiful old house close to the Cathedral. Every one liked Mrs. Percival, and was charmed to go to her parties, which had been made more attractive than usual, this summer, by the presence of her soldier son from India, and her pretty niece, Miss Darrell.

River Gate was a large square red house at the south-west corner of the Close. Its tall stately door and rows of windows looked north, fronting rows of elms and the Chapter-house, and then the Cathedral. To the west and south of the house, a fine old garden in terraces sloped down to the broad river, which was the charm and life of Woolsborough. Under the lowest terrace of the garden was an ancient archway, crumbled by time and overgrown with ivy, where one could turn in from the towing-path and mount up by steps into the Close, and so on, by narrow walled ways, past fragments of old towers and defences, to the west front of the Cathedral. This river gate, which gave its name to Canon Percival's house, was also a private way, by a flight of steps with a locked gate, from his garden to the river.

Mrs. Percival was alone in her drawing-room on Saturday afternoon. Outside, on the high gravel terrace with its red flower-pots, the sun was shining with a soft September brilliancy; but the three tall west windows were darkened, so that there was a deep restful shade in the room. There was also a delightful scent of flowers, and a great deal of varied colour, for which Mrs. Percival had such a fancy that the Canon had been heard to remark, "This room is scarcely ecclesiastical." There were several little dogs, and a tea-table, and a slight general confusion, as if people had been there not long ago. And this was the case, for some visitors had just gone away with Canon Percival into the Cathedral; their large carriage was still driving round and round the Close.

Mrs. Percival appeared to be a little uneasy in her mind, and disturbed from her usual amiability. She snubbed the little dogs when they begged of her, and told them they were greedy. She walked round

the room, pushed the chairs about, went out on the terrace, listened, and tried to look up the river; but trees, and walls, and houses prevented her seeing much.

"I wonder if I have done right," she muttered to herself, taking a quick turn along the terrace; "but knowing Vincent so well, poor dear—I wonder if I ought to have put him off till Monday. He is sure to come now—still the train must be late. Good gracious, here he is!"

With both hands stretched out, and the sweetest smile, and all the pretty grace that belonged to her, she hurried back into the drawing-room to receive Paul Romaine.

"Here you are, my dear! I had almost given you up. So glad to see you. How well you are looking!"

Paul was glancing quickly round the room, the dear old room, bright and sweet as ever. Red Towers was certainly dismal by contrast. But where was his own particular possession, who was going to make Red Towers the most brilliant place in the world?

"Thanks so much! Where's Celia?" he said, smiling and half-shy.

"Yes, of course she ought to have been here to meet you. Try not to be impatient; she will be in very soon. Sit down and have some tea."

"Could I find her?" said Paul.

He had been unreasonable, no doubt; but somehow he had expected to see Celia on the platform at the railway station; and when she was not there, he made sure that she would be under the archway at the entrance of the Close; and then he had told himself, "No, she wouldn't like that, she will be here in the hall;" but no one received him in the hall. Even the drawing-room was empty, till, after the first instant, Mrs. Percival came in. And he not seen Celia since the end of June, when he went abroad, immediately after his engagement.

Paul had been patient enough: he had allowed Mrs. Percival to put him off on one excuse or another, untroubled by doubts. The time was to come which would make amends for everything; and now it was come, and had brought nothing but disappointment. Paul took no notice of the little dogs who were jumping upon him, or of Mrs. Percival's kind advice and offer of tea. He walked across to the window.

"Is she anywhere in the garden?" he said.

There was a certain sacred spot in the

garden, where one evening, more than two months ago, Celia had let him worship her. Everyone else was very proud of his University honours; but she only smiled and looked at him with a shade more interest than before. He had known well enough that these things made no difference to her; but still he had worked with all his strength, partly from natural love of the work, partly to make himself in his own eyes more worthy of her. Some people said that Celia flirted; but she had never flirted with him. Her manner was even cold. Whatever Colonel Ward may have thought, Paul had not had much of what is commonly called encouragement. Perhaps she knew that a look, a smile, a word now and then, was enough to keep Paul where she chose him to be; and, if so, she was a wise girl not to give him any more. Anyhow, when he could be kept within due bounds no longer, she let him speak, and smiled in earnest, and very sweetly accepted him, and Red Towers, and all the rest of it.

Mrs. Percival was, of course, immensely pleased. She had a great respect for Celia's talents, and thought she would make a very good wife for Paul. For Celia herself what could be more desirable! One may fear that Colonel Ward's notion of anything dishonourable in the arrangement never even occurred to Mrs. Percival's mind; and yet she was not quite at ease. She was troubled, at first, by three anxieties: that their summer at Woolsborough would be quite spoilt by tiresome gossip, curiosity, and congratulations (Celia disliked this prospect as much as she did); that her son Vincent, who did not like Paul, and scoffed at him, and was very meddlesome, would in some way spoil the whole thing if he knew it; that Celia had engaged herself to Paul without caring for him in the least. For Mrs. Percival, though she might be worldly and calculating, was soft-hearted, too, and sincerely fond of Paul.

The two first anxieties were disposed of by Celia's wise resolution, that no one but her uncle and aunt should know of her engagement till they left Woolsborough in the autumn. As to the third, when her aunt murmured a few caressing words on the subject, she answered calmly:

"Oh, Paul is a dear boy. I always love boys."

"Will he find that satisfying?" suggested Mrs. Percival, lifting her eyebrows with a faint, dismayed smile.

"Don't be anxious about him; he is quite happy," said Celia; and she added after a moment, "If I wait to marry till I am in love, dear, I shall never marry at all. I don't know what it is. I haven't got it in me."

"Oh, Celia!" Mrs. Percival smiled a little more, and ceased her remonstrances.

But since then, throughout the summer months, she had often been visited by troublesome thoughts, doubting whether it would not have been the best policy, after all, to tell the whole truth at once—to the Bishop, the Chapter, the county, the city, the household—and more especially to Captain Percival, her son. He—his long idle hours passed perpetually with Celia, intimate, friendly, admiring—was in fact his mother's one great towering anxiety. Words of warning had been on her lips several times, and then the truth would certainly have slipped out; but then she remembered Celia's cool worldly wisdom, and Vincent's expressed conviction that in these days a man must marry money, or not at all; and the Canon, when she hinted something to him, asked her smiling whether either of these young people was a fool; and so she kept to her intention, and now, in September, Celia's engagement to Paul Romaine was still a secret. Only Mrs. Percival wished in her heart that she could have kept Paul, for his own sake, away from Woolsborough a few days longer.

She looked at him anxiously, as he moved restlessly to the window. In old days she had always been able to manage Paul: his affectionate, unsuspicious nature had given her no trouble; but this sudden chill of disappointment, this eager pain, which made him turn away suddenly from her now, seemed for a moment almost beyond her diplomatic powers. She felt angry with Celia, who had known quite well what time Paul was coming. But perhaps it was Vincent's fault. She wished that they had not gone out together on this particular afternoon. But Vincent was going away on Monday, and would have been dreadfully injured if his cousin had thought it necessary to stay at home to-day.

"I am very sorry Celia is not in, Paul," said Mrs. Percival in her sweetest tones. "I know she meant to be here. But Vincent wanted her to go out in the boat with him—he leaves us on Monday—and as he knows nothing, you see, it may have been a little difficult to bring him back in time. You mustn't be angry with Celia."

"Angry! Nothing of the sort," said Paul. He laughed, and came back to the table, and quietly took his cup of tea from Mrs. Percival, who looked up smiling into his eyes. "I rather wish everybody had known about it from the first," he said.

"Do you?" she answered. "But it would not have made much difference to you, dear boy, as you were away all the time. And we had our little reasons, you know. But now, after next week, of course everybody may be told. We think of moving to Holm in about a week's time."

"May I stay here till then?" asked Paul.

"Of course. I thought you would. And now tell me about Switzerland."

"There's nothing to tell you, except that it was very jolly."

"And what have you been doing since you came home?"

"Shooting. There are really a great lot of birds this year. The Colonel and I have had some capital sport."

"The Canon will be glad to hear that," said Mrs. Percival. "And how is the dear old Colonel? So you told him our news—and how did he take it? Was he the least bit hurt that you had not told him before?"

"Well, perhaps he was," Paul confessed. He looked on the floor, slightly confused, for certainly he could not tell Mrs. Percival how Colonel Ward took the news.

"I was afraid of that," said she. "He is a little touchy, poor dear!"

"He soon got over it," said Paul. "He thinks it's a good thing that Celia knows more about horses than I do. And I was talking over servants and things with him, you know—and he thinks it won't do to keep the Sabines."

"Why!" said Mrs. Percival with her pretty laugh. "Does he think Celia will want a dozen powdered footmen? Old bachelors are not the best judges, are they? But there will be plenty of time to settle all that; you need not bother yourself about changes just yet. In fact, if I were you, I would begin quietly—because you are not making a great match, you know, Paul."

"I think I am," he said in a low voice. He always felt very stupid, when a pretty speech seemed to be demanded of him, and generally rushed on to something else as fast as possible.

"When do you think she will let it be, Mrs. Percival?" he asked.

"You must ask her. But you are both so young that there need be no hurry."

"I hate waiting," said Paul. "What is the use of dragging through miserable days without any reason? It's a waste out of one's life—don't you know it is?"

"Well, no. I must say I was very happy and comfortable when I was engaged. Arthur, to be sure, was just as ridiculous as you are now. But then he had some reason for it, because I was not such a good steady girl as your Celia."

"Ah, I know," said Paul, smiling as he looked at her. "The Colonel has never got over it."

Mrs. Percival smiled too, looking quite conscious, and pretty, and young, though she was past fifty. Her hair was brown still, frizzed and curled under a most becoming cap; her complexion was soft and white; she had lovely hands; and her brown eyes had a way of smiling and shining which was irresistible.

"Poor dear! I do wish he had married somebody," she said. "And yet I don't know; he is very happy in that nice little house of yours. By the by, you must always go on asking his advice, Paul, or he will be injured."

"Trust me for that. Besides, I should be a fool if I didn't; he knows such a lot of things."

"Yes, so he does. And he is as good as gold, dear old fellow! I wonder now, Paul, whether he means to leave you his money."

"His money? Colonel Ward? I never thought about it," said Paul vaguely. "Has he got any? Not much, I should think."

"His uncle left him at least three or four thousand a year," said Mrs. Percival. "Do you mean to say you didn't know that? Of course he has lived all these years on three or four hundred."

"Really! Well, I never thought about it," repeated Paul. "Leave it to me? Of course not. Why should he?"

"He has no relations; and I believe he likes you better than anybody else."

"Except you. You are his favourite person in the world. I don't believe you could do anything the Colonel would think wrong, strict as he is. It's beautiful, you know, the way he talks about you, and the way he looks when one mentions your name."

They went on talking about Colonel Ward for some minutes, till the Canon came in with his rather grand air of welcome. After a few speeches to Paul, he began talking to his wife about the visitors who had just driven away; and then Paul, leaving them together, went out into the garden, and ran down to the lower terrace, and out under the old gateway to the towing-path, to watch for Celia.

It was a still, oppressive evening. Away across the deep green meadows, beyond the river, the sun was going down into a bank of cloud and fog, all suffused with a red light, which made the slow broad current glow with a sort of burnished splendour. Blue evening mists were beginning to hover about the river, and to creep up the steep, old, irregular streets which wound down to the quay, between the Cathedral and all its buildings, and the bridge a few hundred yards above. There were boats about the bridge, and children playing and screaming, and the river came sweeping down under the three wide arches, but Paul did not see the boat he was looking for. After all, he did not know whether Vincent Percival had taken his cousin up or down the river; Mrs. Percival could not tell him. So he looked up towards the bridge, and saw nothing; and turned round, and walked a little way in the other direction, towards a distance of willow-trees and far-stretching meadows, with houses and gardens here and there, the southern outskirts of the town. No boat, no Celia: the sun was almost obscured now, glimmering, a dim red ball, in the midst of the clouds, and the mists were gathering over the water. It was almost twilight; and still Paul paced up and down the towing-path, under the old river gate and the dark half-ruined walls with their heavy tresses of ivy. It struck him that he might go up to the bridge, to the man who had charge of the boats there; he would know if they had passed; and then it would be very possible to take a canoe, and go to meet them. But some mysterious instinct said: "Celia would not like that;" and so he stayed where he was, loitering about the archway, straining his eyes one way or the other, as the minutes dragged on and the twilight deepened.